

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 GEORGE 01587 171909Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6814

S E C R E T GEORGETOWN 1587

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PINT, GY
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO PRIMIN BURNHAM

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 1338 B. STATE 124767

1. THE JUDGMENT I EXPRESSED IN REF A OF APRIL 26 REMAINS UNCHANGED. THE ONLY THING THAT HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN IS THAT THE DEBATE OVER BURNHAM'S PROPOSAL TO ALTER PROFOUNDLY THE CONSTITUTION AND THEREBY AVOID THE NECESSITY OF HOLDING REQUIRED PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS THIS YEAR HAS WAXED WARMER WITH EACH PASSING DAY. DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE PROPOSAL WERE MOUNTED LAST WEEK AND MORE ARE SCHEDULED FOR THIS WEEK, AND A GENERAL STRIKE IS THREATENED. THE ARRAY OF OPPOSITION TO THIS PROPOSAL, WHICH NOW INCLUDES THE GUYANA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, THE LAWYERS, THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY, THE LIBERATOR PARTY, THE WORKING PEOPLES' ALLIANCE, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS, ETC. REPRESENTS THE MOST FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE THAT BURNHAM HAS FACED SINCE COMING TO THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP.

2. THE CONCERN I EXPRESSED IN REF A WAS MOTIVATED BY THE VERY REAL POSSIBILITY THAT BURNHAM, CHALLENGED AS HE IS DOMESTICALLY, MIGHT ATTEMPT TO TURN TO HIS OWN DOMESTIC POLITICAL ADVANTAGE A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER AT

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THIS CRITICAL MOMENT. IN THIS POLITICAL MICROCOSM THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER WILL BE READ AS SOMETHING CONCEIVED AND EXECUTED WITHIN THE LAST FEW DAYS IN FULL COMPREHENSION OF THE HEIGHTENED POLITICAL DEBATE NOW RAGING IN GEORGETOWN; NO ONE HERE WOULD EVER BELIEVE -- EVEN IF ONE WERE TO ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN -- THAT THE LETTER HAD JUST NOW EMERGED AFTER A BUREAUCRATIC GESTATION PERIOD OF

OVER TEN WEEKS. AND SINCE ALL KNOWLEDGEABLE GUYANESE
KNOW OF OUR VARIOUS EFFORTS TO MANIPULATE BURNHAM'S
INSTALLATION AS PRIME MINISTER IN THE EARLY AND MID-1960S,
IT IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT THE PRESENT LETTER, NO
MATTER HOW NON-CONTROVERSIAL IT MIGHT APPEAR OUTSIDE
GUYANA'S POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE, WILL BE VIEWED AS A FRESH US
EFFORT TO PROP UP HIS REGIME, ESPECIALLY THE REFERENCE IN THE
LETTER'S TEXT TO "\$20 MILLION" IN ASSISTANCE TO GUYANA.
SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN NO SUGGESTION THAT THE US IS TAKING
SIDES IN THE IMPORTANT CONSTITUTIONAL CONFRONTATION NOW EMERGING.
GIVEN THE POLITICAL UNCERTAINTIES AT THIS JUNCTURE IN GUYANA'S
POLITICAL EVOLUTION, IT WOULD SEEM TO ME THAT A SIDELINE
POSITION IS THE ONLY PROPER ONE FOR US AT THIS TIME. IT DOES
NOT APPEAR TO BE THE MOMENT TO ENGAGE THE PRESIDENT. IT THEREFORE
REMAINS MY RECOMMENDATION THAT THE LETTER NOT BE SENT.
BURKE

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NNN

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